

Canadian English

Canadian English (CanE, CE, en-CA)^[5] is the set of varieties of the English language native to Canada. According to the 2016 census, English was the first language of more than 19.4 million Canadians, or 58.1% of the total population; the remainder of the population were native speakers of Canadian French (20.8%) or other languages (21.1%).^[6] A larger number, 28 million people, reported using English as their dominant language.^[7] Of Canadians outside the province of Quebec, 82% reported speaking English natively, but within Quebec the figure was just 7.5% as most of its residents are native speakers of Quebec French.^[8]

Canadian English contains major elements of both British and American English, as well as some uniquely Canadian characteristics.^[9] While, broadly speaking, Canadian English tends to be closest to American English,^{[10][11]} the precise influence of American English, British English and other sources on Canadian English varieties has been the ongoing focus of systematic studies since the 1950s.^[12]

Phonologically, Canadian and American English are classified together as North American English, emphasizing the fact that the vast majority of outsiders, even other native English speakers, cannot distinguish the typical accents of the two countries by sound alone. There are minor disagreements over the degree to which even Canadians and Americans themselves can differentiate their own two accents,^{[13][14]} and there is even evidence that some Western American English (Pacific Northwest and California English, for example) is undergoing a vowel shift that coincides with a vowel shift occurring in mainland Canadian English, first reported in the early 1990s.^[15] The perceived national standard dialect of Canada is Standard Canadian English.

Canadian English	
Region	Canada
Native speakers	20.1 million in Canada (2016 census) ^[1] about 15 million, c. 7 million of which with French as the L1
Language family	Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Germanic ▪ West Germanic ▪ Ingvaeanic ▪ Anglo-Frisian ▪ English ▪ North American English ▪ Canadian English
Early forms	Old English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Middle English ▪ Early Modern English
Writing system	Latin (English alphabet) Unified English Braille ^[2]
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	—
Glottolog	<i>None</i>
IETF	en-CA ^{[3][4]}

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History

The term "Canadian English" is first attested in a speech by the Reverend A. Constable Geikie in an address to the Canadian Institute in 1857 (see DCHP-1 Online (<http://www.dchp.ca/DCHP-1/>), s.v. "Canadian English", Avis *et al.*, 1967^[16]). Geikie, a Scottish-born Canadian, reflected the Anglocentric attitude that would be prevalent in Canada for the next hundred years when he referred to the language as "a corrupt dialect", in comparison with what he considered the proper English spoken by immigrants from Britain.^[17]

Canadian English is the product of five waves of immigration and settlement over a period of more than two centuries.^[18] The first large wave of permanent English-speaking settlement in Canada, and linguistically the most important, was the influx of Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution, chiefly from the Mid-Atlantic States—as such, Canadian English is believed by some scholars to have derived from northern American English.^{[19][20]} Canadian English has been developing features of its own since the early 19th century.^{[21][22]} The second wave from Britain and Ireland was encouraged to settle in Canada after the War of 1812 by the governors of Canada, who were worried about American dominance and influence among its citizens. Further

waves of immigration from around the globe peaked in 1910, 1960 and at the present time had a lesser influence, but they did make Canada a multicultural country, ready to accept linguistic change from around the world during the current period of globalization.^[23]

The languages of Aboriginal peoples in Canada started to influence European languages used in Canada even before widespread settlement took place,^[24] and the French of Lower Canada provided vocabulary, with words such as *toque* and *portage*,^[13] to the English of Upper Canada.^[17]

While the process of the making of Canadian English—its documentation and codification—goes back to the 1930s,^[25] the 1960s were the key period.^[26] Like other social developments in Canada, the general acceptance of Canadian English has taken its time. According to a recent study, a noticeable shift in public discourse can only be seen in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, when Canadian English was seen as a "given", generally accepted default variety, while before such statements were usually "balanced" by doubts.^[27]

Historical linguistics

Studies on earlier forms of English in Canada are rare, yet connections with other work to historical linguistics can be forged. An overview of diachronic work on Canadian English, or diachronically relevant work, is Dollinger (2012, updated to 2017).^[28] Until the 2000s, basically all commentators on the history of CanE have argued from the "language-external" history, i.e. social and political history.^[29]^[30] An exception has been in the area of lexis, where Avis *et al.*'s 1967 *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* offered real-time historical data through its quotations. Recently, historical linguists have started to study earlier Canadian English with historical linguistic data. DCHP-1 is now available in open access.^[31] Most notably, Dollinger (2008) (https://www.academia.edu/4006034/New-Dialect_Formation_in_Canada_Evidence_from_the_English_Modal_Auxiliaries) pioneered the historical corpus linguistic approach for English in Canada with CONTE (Corpus of Early Ontario English, 1776–1849) and offers a developmental scenario for 18th- and 19th-century Ontario. Recently, Reuter (2015),^[32] with a 19th-century newspaper corpus from Ontario, has confirmed the scenario laid out in Dollinger (2008).

Historically, Canadian English included a class-based sociolect known as **Canadian dainty**.^[33] Treated as a marker of upper-class prestige in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Canadian dainty was marked by the use of some features of British English pronunciation, resulting in an accent similar, but not identical, to the Mid-Atlantic accent known in the United States.^[33] This accent faded in prominence following World War II, when it became stigmatized as pretentious, and is now almost never heard in contemporary Canadian life outside of archival recordings used in film, television or radio documentaries.^[33]

Orthography

Canadian spelling of the English language combines British and American conventions, the two dominant varieties, and adds some domestic idiosyncrasies. Spelling in Canadian English co-varies with regional and social variables, somewhat more so, perhaps, than in the two dominant varieties of English, yet general trends have emerged since the 1970s.^[34]

- Words such as **realize** and **paralyze** are usually spelled with *-ize* or *-yze* rather than *-ise* or *-yse*.
- French-derived words that in American English end with *-or* and *-er*, such as **color** or **center**, often retain British spellings (**colour** and **centre**).
- While the United States uses the Anglo-French spelling **defense** and **offense** (noun), most Canadians use the British spellings **defence** and **offence**. (But **defensive** and **offensive** are universal across all forms of English.)

- Some nouns, as in British English, take *-ice* while matching verbs take *-ise* – for example, *practice* and *licence* are nouns while *practise* and *license* are the respective corresponding verbs. (But *advice* and *advise* are universal.)
- Canadian spelling sometimes retains the British practice of doubling the consonant *-l* when adding suffixes to words even when the final syllable (before the suffix) is not stressed. Compare Canadian (and British) *travelled*, *counselling*, and *marvellous* (more often than not in Canadian while always doubled in British) to American *traveled*, *counseling*, and *marvelous*. In American English, this consonant is only doubled when stressed; thus, for instance, *controllable* and *enthralling* are universal. (But both Canadian and British English use *balloted* and *profiting*.^[35])
- In other cases, Canadian and American usage differs from British spelling, such as in the case of nouns like *curb*, *tire*, and *aluminum*,^[36] which in British English are spelled *kerb*, *tyre*, and *aluminium*.

International English Spelling Chart				
United States	Canada	UK	UK (other spelling)	Australia
color	colour	colour	colour	colour
center	centre	centre	centre	centre
globalization	globalization	globalisation	globalization	globalisation
realize	realize	realise	realize	realise
analyze	analyze	analyse	analyze	analyse
travelling	travelling	travelling	travelling	travelling
defence	defence	defence	defence	defence
computer programs, concert programs	computer programs, concert program	computer programs, concert programme	computer programs, concert programme	computer programs, concert program
gray	grey	grey	grey	grey
solid	solid	solid	solid	solid
abominem	abomination	abomination	abomination	abomination

Canadian spelling in comparison with American and British spelling.

Canadian spelling conventions can be partly explained by Canada's trade history. For instance, the British spelling of the word *cheque* probably relates to Canada's once-important ties to British financial institutions. Canada's *automobile* industry, on the other hand, has been dominated by American firms from its inception, explaining why Canadians use the American spelling of *tire* (hence, "Canadian Tire") and American terminology for automobiles and their parts (for example, *truck* instead of *lorry*, *gasoline* instead of *petrol*, *trunk* instead of *boot*).^[35]

Canada's political history has also had an influence on Canadian spelling. Canada's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, once advised the Governor General of Canada to issue an order-in-council directing that government papers be written in the British style.^[37]

A contemporary reference for formal Canadian spelling is the spelling used for Hansard transcripts of the Parliament of Canada. Many Canadian editors, though, use the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, often along with the chapter on spelling in *Editing Canadian English*, and, where necessary (depending on context), one or more other references.

Throughout part of the 20th century, some Canadian newspapers adopted American spellings,^[38] for example, *color* as opposed to the British-based *colour*. Some of the most substantial historical spelling data can be found in Dollinger (2010)^[39] and Grue (2013).^[40] The use of such spellings was the long-standing practice of the Canadian Press perhaps since that news agency's inception, but visibly the norm prior to World War II.^[41] The practice of dropping the letter *u* in such words was also considered a labour-saving technique during the early days of printing in which movable type was set manually.^[41] Canadian newspapers also received much of their international content from American press agencies, therefore it was much easier for editorial staff to leave the spellings from the wire services as provided.^[42]

In the 1990s, Canadian newspapers began to adopt the British spelling variants such as *-our* endings, notably with The Globe and Mail changing its spelling policy in October 1990.^[43] Other Canadian newspapers adopted similar changes later that decade, such as the Southam newspaper chain's conversion in September 1998.^[44] The Toronto Star adopted this new spelling policy in September 1997 after that publication's ombudsman discounted the issue earlier in 1997.^{[42][45]} The *Star* had always avoided using recognized Canadian spelling, citing the Gage Canadian Dictionary in their defence. Controversy around this issue was frequent. When the *Gage Dictionary* finally adopted standard Canadian spelling, the *Star* followed suit. Some publishers, e.g. Maclean's, continue to prefer American spellings.

Dictionaries

The first Canadian dictionaries of Canadian English were edited by Walter Spencer Avis and published by Gage Ltd. The *Beginner's Dictionary* (1962), the *Intermediate Dictionary* (1964) and, finally, the *Senior Dictionary* (1967) were milestones in Canadian English lexicography. In November 1967 A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles (DCHP) was published and completed the first edition of Gage's Dictionary of Canadian English Series. The DCHP documents the historical development of Canadian English words that can be classified as "Canadianisms". It therefore includes words such as mukluk, Canuck, and bluff, but does not list common core words such as desk, table or car. Many secondary schools in Canada use the graded dictionaries. The dictionaries have regularly been updated since: the *Senior Dictionary*, edited by Robert John Gregg,^[46] was renamed *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. Its fifth edition was printed beginning in 1997. Gage was acquired by Thomson Nelson around 2003. The latest editions were published in 2009 by HarperCollins. On 17 March 2017 a second edition of DCHP, the online Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles 2 (DCHP-2), was published. DCHP-2 incorporates the c. 10000 lexemes from DCHP-1 and adds c. 1300 novel meanings or 1002 lexemes to the documented lexicon of Canadian English.

In 1997, the *ITP Nelson Dictionary of the Canadian English Language* was another product, but has not been updated since.

In 1998, Oxford University Press produced a Canadian English dictionary, after five years of lexicographical research, entitled *The Oxford Canadian Dictionary*. A second edition, retitled *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, was published in 2004. Just as the older dictionaries it includes uniquely Canadian words and words borrowed from other languages, and surveyed spellings, such as whether *colour* or *color* was the more popular choice in common use. Paperback and concise versions (2005, 2006), with minor updates, are available.

Phonology and phonetics

In terms of the major sound systems (phonologies) of English around the world, Canadian English aligns most closely to American English, both being grouped together under a common North American English sound system; the mainstream Canadian accent ("Standard Canadian") is often compared to the very similar and largely overlapping "General American" accent, an accent widely spoken throughout the United States and perceived there as being relatively lacking in any noticeable regional features.

The provinces east of Ontario show the largest dialect diversity. Northern Canada is, according to William Labov, a dialect region in formation, and a homogeneous dialect has not yet formed.^[47] A very homogeneous dialect exists in Western and Central Canada, a situation that is similar to that of the Western United States. Labov identifies an inland region that concentrates all of the defining features of the dialect centred on the Prairies, with periphery areas with more variable patterns including the metropolitan areas of Vancouver and Toronto.^[11] This dialect forms a dialect continuum with the far Western U.S. English, however it is sharply differentiated from the Inland Northern U.S. English of the central and eastern Great Lakes region.

Canadian English raises the diphthong onsets, /ə, ʌ/, before voiceless segments; diphthongs /ai/ and /au/.^[48]

Standard Canadian English

Standard Canadian English is socially defined. It is the variety spoken, in Chamber's (1998: 252) definition, by Anglophone or multilingual residents, who are second generation or later (i.e. born in Canada) and who live in urban settings.^[49] Applying this definition, c. 36% of the Canadian population speak Standard Canadian English in the 2006 population, with 38% in the 2011 census.^[50]

Regional variation

The literature has for a long time conflated the notions of Standard Canadian English (StCE) and regional variation. While some regional dialects are close with the StCE, they are not identical with it. To the untrained ear, for instance, a B.C. middle class speaker from a rural setting may sound like a StCE speaker, while, given Chambers' definition, such person, because of the rural provenance, would not be included in the accepted definition (see the previous section). The *Atlas of North American English*, while being the best source for U.S. regional variation, is not a good source for Canadian regional variation, as its analysis is based on only 33^[51] Canadian speakers. Boberg's (2005, 2008) studies offer the best data for the delimitation of dialect zones. The results for vocabulary^[52] and phonetics^[53] overlap to a great extent, which has allowed the proposal of dialect zones. Dollinger and Clarke^[54] distinguish between:

- West (B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba; with B.C. a sub-zone on the lexical level)
- Ontario (with Northwestern Ontario a transition zone with the West)
- Quebec (concerning the c. 500000 Anglophone speakers in the province, not the francophone speakers of English)
- Maritimes (PEI, NS, NB, with PEI a subgroup on the lexical level)
- Newfoundland

British Columbia

British Columbia English shares dialect features with both Standard Canadian English and the American Pacific Northwest English. In Vancouver, speakers exhibit more vowel retraction of /æ/ before nasals than people from Toronto, and this retraction may become a regional marker of West Coast English.^[55] /æg/ raising (found words such as bag, vague and bagel), a prominent feature in western American speakers, is also found in Vancouver speakers.^[56] Canadian raising (found in words such as "about" and "writer") is less prominent in B.C. than other parts of the country and is on the decline further, with many speakers not raising /aɪ/ before voiceless consonants. Younger speakers in the Greater Vancouver area do not even raise /aʊ/, causing "about" to sound somewhat like "a boat". The "o" in such words as *holy, goal, load, know*, etc. is pronounced as a back and rounded [o], but not as rounded as in the Prairies where there are strong Scandinavian, Slavic and German influences.

Ontario

Canadian raising is quite strong throughout the province of Ontario, except within the Ottawa Valley. The Canadian Shift is also a common vowel shift found in Ontario. The retraction of /æ/ was found to be more advanced for women in Ontario than for people from the Prairies or Atlantic Canada and men.^[57]

In Southwestern Ontario (roughly in the line south from Sarnia to St. Catharines), despite the existence of the many characteristics of West/Central Canadian English, many speakers, especially those under 30, speak a dialect which is influenced by the Inland Northern American English dialect, though there are minor differences such as Canadian raising (e.g. "ice" vs "my"). Also, the vowel of "bag" sounds closer to "vague" or "egg"; "right" sounds like "rate"; and the "ah" vowel in "can't" is drawn out, sounding like "kee-ant".

The subregion of Midwestern Ontario consists of the Counties of Huron, Bruce, Grey, and Perth. The "Queen's Bush," as the area was called, did not experience communication with Southwestern and Central dialects until the early 20th century. Thus, a strong accent similar to Central Ontario is heard, yet many different phrasings exist. It is typical in the area to drop phonetic sounds to make shorter contractions, such as:

prolly (probably), *goin'* (going), and "Wuts goin' on tonight? D'ya wanna do sumthin'?" It is particularly strong in the County of Bruce, so much that it is commonly referred to as being the Bruce Cownian (Bruce Countian) accent. Also 'er' sounds are often pronounced 'air', with "were" sounding more like "wear".

Residents of the Golden Horseshoe (including the Greater Toronto Area) are known to merge the second /t/ with the /n/ in Toronto, pronouncing the name variously as [to' ɪnən̩o], [tə' ɪnən̩o] or even ['tɪnən̩o] or ['tɪnən̩ə]. This, however, is not unique to Toronto; for example, Atlanta is often pronounced "Atlanna" by residents. In the Greater Toronto Area, the *th* sound /ð/ is often pronounced [d]. Sometimes /ð/ is elided altogether, resulting in "Do you want this one er'iss one?" The word *southern* is often pronounced with [aʊ]. In the area north of the Regional Municipality of York and south of Parry Sound, notably among those who were born in the surrounding communities, the cutting down of syllables and consonants often heard, e.g. "probably" is reduced to "prolly" or "probly" when used as a response. In Greater Toronto, the diphthong tends to be fronted (as a result the word *about* is pronounced as [ə' bɛʊt] or 'a-beh-oot').

The Greater Toronto Area is diverse linguistically, with 44 percent of its people holding a mother tongue other than English.^[58] As a result Toronto has a distinct variation from other regions.^[59] In Toronto's ethnic communities there are many words that are distinct, particularly those that come from the city's large Caribbean community. Although only 1.5% of Torontonians speak French, a relatively low proportion of them (56.2%) are native speakers of English, according to the 2006 Census.^[60] As a result Toronto shows a more variable speech pattern.^[61]

In Eastern Ontario, Canadian raising is not as strong as it is in the rest of the province. In Prescott and Russell, parts of Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry and Eastern Ottawa, French accents are often mixed with English ones due to the high Franco-Ontarian population there. In Lanark County, Western Ottawa and Leeds-Grenville and the rest of Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, the accent spoken is nearly identical to that spoken in Central Ontario and the Quinte area. Phrases such as "got it" is often pronounced as [gɔrɪ?]. *Okay* is often pronounced as [ɔɪke], while *hello* is often pronounced as [helo].

A linguistic enclave has also formed in the Ottawa Valley, heavily influenced by original Scottish, Irish, and German settlers, and existing along the Ontario-Quebec boundary, which has its own distinct accent known as the Ottawa Valley twang (or brogue).^[62] Phonetically, the Ottawa Valley twang is characterized by the lack of Canadian raising as well as the cot-caught merger, two common elements of mainstream Canadian English. However, this accent is quite rare in the region today.^[63]

Quebec

English is a minority language in Quebec (with French the majority), but has many speakers in Montreal, the Eastern Townships and in the Gatineau-Ottawa region. Uniquely, many people in Montreal distinguish between words like *marry* versus *merry* and *parish* versus *perish*,^[11] which are homophones to most other speakers of Canadian English. A person with English mother tongue and still speaking English as the first language is called an *Anglophone* versus a French speaker, or *Francophone*. Quebec Anglophones generally pronounce French street names in Montreal as French words. *Pie IX* Boulevard is pronounced as in French, not as "pie nine", but as / pi: 'nʊf/ *pee-NUUF* (compare French /pi.nœf/). On the other hand, Anglophones do pronounce final *d*'s as in *Bernard* and *Bouchard*; the word *Montreal* is pronounced as an English word and *Rue Lambert-Closse* is known as *Clossy Street* (vs French /klɔs/).

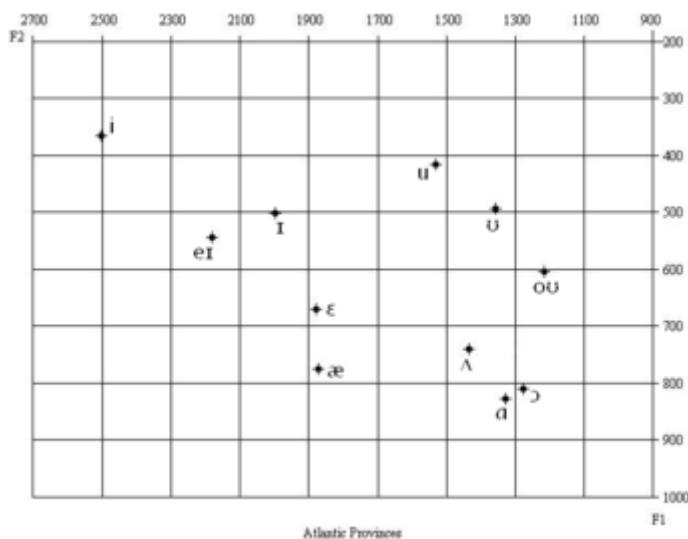
In the city of Montreal, especially in some of the western suburbs like Côte-St-Luc and Hampstead, there is a strong Jewish influence in the English spoken in these areas. A large wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union before and after World War II is also evident today. Their English has a strong Yiddish influence; there are some similarities to English spoken in New York. Words used mainly in Quebec and especially in Montreal are:^[64] *stage* for "apprenticeship" or "internship", *copybook* for a notebook, *dépanneur* or *dep* for a convenience store, and *guichet* for an ABM/ATM. It is also common for

Anglophones, particularly of Greek or Italian descent, to use translated French words instead of common English equivalents such as "open" and "close" for "on" and "off" or "Open the lights, please" for "Turn on the lights, please".

Maritimes

Many in the Maritime provinces – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island – have an accent that sounds more like Scottish English and, in some places, Irish English than General American. Outside of major communities, dialects can vary markedly from community to community, as well as from province to province, reflecting ethnic origin as well as a past in which there were few roads and many communities, with some villages very isolated. Into the 1980s, residents of villages in northern Nova Scotia could identify themselves by dialects and accents distinctive to their village. The dialects of Prince Edward Island are often considered the most distinct grouping.

The phonology of Maritimer English has some unique features:



Based on Labov *et al.*; averaged F1/F2 means for speakers from N.S., N.B., N.L.

- *Cot-caught* merger in effect, but toward a central vowel ä.
- No Canadian Shift of the short front vowels
- Pre-consonantal /r/ is sometimes (though rarely) deleted.
- The flapping of intervocalic /t/ and /d/ to alveolar tap [ɾ] between vowels, as well as pronouncing it as a glottal stop [?], is less common in the Maritimes. Therefore, *battery* is pronounced ['bætɾi] instead of ['bær(ə)ɾi].
- Especially among the older generation, /w/ and /hw/ are not merged; that is, the beginning sound of *why*, *white*, and *which* is different from that of *witch*, *with*, and *wear*.
- Like most varieties of CanE, Maritimer English contains Canadian raising.

Newfoundland

The dialect spoken in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, an autonomous dominion until 31 March 1949, is often considered the most distinctive Canadian English dialect. Some Newfoundland English differs in vowel pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and preservation of archaic adverbial-intensifiers. The dialect can vary markedly from community to community, as well as from region to region, reflecting ethnic origin as well as a past in which there were few roads and many communities, and fishing villages in particular remained very isolated. A few speakers have a transitional pin–pen merger.^[11]

Aboriginal north

First Nations and Inuit people from Northern Canada speak a version of Canadian English influenced by the phonology of their first languages. European Canadians in these regions are relatively recent arrivals, and have not produced a dialect that is distinct from southern Canadian English.^[65]

Grammar

There are a handful of syntactical practices unique to Canadian English. When writing, Canadians may start a sentence with *As well*, in the sense of "in addition"; this construction is a Canadianism.^[66]

Unlike British English, North American English strongly prefers *have to have got* to denote possession or obligation (as in *I have a car* vs. *I've got a car*); Canadian English, however, differs from American English in that it tends to eschew plain *got* (*I got a car*), which is a common third option in very informal U.S. English.^[67]

In speech and in writing, Canadian English speakers permit (and often use) a transitive form for some past participles where only an intransitive form is permitted in most other dialects. Examples include: "finished something" (rather than "finished with something"), "done something" (rather than "done with something"), "graduated university" (rather than "graduated from university").

Date and time notation

Date and time notation in Canadian English is a mixture of British and American practices. The date can be written in the form of either "July 1, 2017" or "1 July 2017": the latter is common in more formal writing and bilingual contexts.^[68] The [Government of Canada](#) only recommends writing all-numeric dates in the form of YYYY-MM-DD (e.g. 2017-07-01), following [ISO 8601](#).^[69] Nonetheless, the traditional DD/MM/YY and MM/DD/YY systems remain in everyday use, which can be interpreted in multiple ways: 01/07/17 can mean either 1 July 2017 or 7 January 2017. [Private members' bills](#) have repeatedly attempted to clarify the situation.^[70]

The government also recommends use of the [24-hour clock](#), which is widely used in contexts such as transportation schedules, parking meters, and data transmission.^[71] Many speakers of English use the [12-hour clock](#) in everyday speech, even when reading from a 24-hour display, similar to the use of the [24-hour clock](#) in the [United Kingdom](#).



Canadian passport stamp from Queenston Bridge, showing the date 8 June 2014.

Vocabulary

Where Canadian English shares vocabulary with other English dialects, it tends to share most with American English, but also has many non-American terms distinctively shared instead with Britain. British and American terms also can coexist in Canadian English to various extents, sometimes with new nuances in meaning; a classic example is *holiday* (British) often used interchangeably with *vacation* (American), though, in Canadian speech, the latter can more narrowly mean a trip elsewhere and the former can mean general time off work. In addition, the vocabulary of Canadian English also features some words that are seldom (if ever) found elsewhere. A good resource for these and other words is the [Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles](#), which is currently being revised at the [University of British Columbia](#) in [Vancouver](#), British Columbia. The Canadian public appears to take interest in unique "Canadianisms": words that are distinctively characteristic of Canadian English—though perhaps not exclusive to Canada; there is some disagreement about the extent to which "Canadianism" means a term actually unique to Canada, with such an understanding possibly overstated by the popular media.^{[9][72]} As a member of the [Commonwealth of Nations](#), Canada shares many items of institutional terminology and professional designations with the countries of the former British Empire – for example, *constable*, for a police officer of the lowest rank, and *chartered accountant*.

Education

The term *college*, which refers to post-secondary education in general in the U.S., refers in Canada to either a post-secondary technical or vocational institution, or to one of the colleges that exist as federated schools within some Canadian universities. Most often, a *college* is a community college, not a university. It may also refer to a CEGEP in Quebec. In Canada, *college student* might denote someone obtaining a diploma in business management (this would be an associate degree in the United States); while *university student* is the term for someone earning a bachelor's degree. For that reason, *going to college* in Canada does not have the same meaning as *going to university*, unless the speaker or context clarifies the specific level of post-secondary education that is meant.

Within the public school system the chief administrator of a school is generally "the principal", as in the United States, but the term is not used preceding his or her name, i.e. "Principal Smith". The assistant to the principal is not titled as "assistant principal", but rather as "vice-principal", although the former is not unknown. This usage is identical to that in Northern Ireland.

Canadian universities publish *calendars* or *schedules*, not *catalogs* as in the U.S.. Canadian students *write* or *take* exams (in the U.S., students generally "take" exams while teachers "write" them); they rarely *sit* them (standard British usage). Those who supervise students during an exam are sometimes called *invigilators* as in Britain, or sometimes *proctors* as in the U.S.; usage may depend on the region or even the individual institution.^[73]

Successive years of school are usually referred to as *grade one*, *grade two*, and so on. In Quebec, the speaker (if Francophone) will often say *primary one*, *primary two* (a direct translation from the French), and so on; while Anglophones will say *grade one*, *grade two*. (Compare American *first grade*, *second grade* (sporadically found in Canada), and English/Welsh *Year 1*, *Year 2*, Scottish/Nth.Irish *Primary 1*, *Primary 2* or *P1*, *P2*, and Sth.Irish *First Class*, *Second Class* and so on.).^[74] The year of school before grade 1 is usually called "Kindergarten", with the exception of Nova Scotia, where it is called "grade primary".

In the U.S., the four years of high school are termed the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years (terms also used for college years); in Canada, the specific levels are used instead (i.e., "grade nine").^[75] As for higher education, only the term *freshman* (often reduced to *frosh*) has some currency in Canada.^[75] The American usages "sophomore", "junior" and "senior" are not used in Canadian university terminology, or in speech. The specific high-school grades and university years are therefore stated and individualized; for example, *the grade 12s failed to graduate; John is in his second year at McMaster*. The "first year", "third year" designation also applies to Canadian law school students, as opposed to the common American usage of "1L", "2L" and "3L".

Canadian students use the term *marks* (more common in England) or *grades* (more common in the US) to refer to their results; usage is very mixed.^[75]

Units of measurement

Unlike in the United States, use of metric units within a majority of (but not all) industries is standard in Canada, as a result of the partial national adoption of the metric system during the mid-to-late 1970s that was eventually stalled; this has spawned some colloquial usages such as *klick* for kilometre (as also heard in the U.S. military).

Nonetheless, US units are still used in many situations. Imperial volumes are also used, albeit very rarely - although many Canadians and Americans mistakenly conflate the measurements systems despite their slight differences from each other.

For example, English Canadians state their weight and height in pounds and feet/inches, respectively. This is also the case for many Quebec Francophones. Distances while playing golf are always marked and discussed in yards, though official scorecards may also show metres. Temperatures for cooking are often given in Fahrenheit, while the weather is given in Celsius. Directions in the Prairie provinces are sometimes given using miles, because the country roads generally follow the mile-based grid of the Dominion Land Survey. Motor vehicle speed limits are measured in kilometres per hour.

Canadians measure property, both residential and commercial, in square feet exclusively. Fuel efficiency is less frequently discussed in miles per US gallon, more often the metric L/100 km despite gasoline being sold by the litre. The Letter paper size of 8.5 inches × 11 inches is used instead of the international and metric equivalent A4 size of 210 mm × 297 mm. Beer cans are 355 mL (12 US oz), while beer bottles are typically 341 mL (12 Imperial oz).

Transportation

- Although Canadian lexicon features both *railway* and *railroad*, *railway* is the usual term in naming (witness Canadian National Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway), though *railroad* can be heard fairly frequently in some regions; most rail terminology in Canada, however, follows American usage (for example, *ties* and *cars* rather than *sleepers* and *carriages*).
- A two-way ticket can be either a *round-trip* (American term) or a *return* (British term).
- The terms *highway* (for example, Trans-Canada Highway), *expressway* (Central Canada, as in the Gardiner Expressway) and *freeway* (Sherwood Park Freeway, Edmonton) are often used to describe various high speed roads with varying levels of access control. Generally, but not exclusively, *highway* refers to any provincially funded road regardless of its access control. Often such roads will be numbered. Similar to the US, the terms *expressway* and *freeway* are often used interchangeably to refer to controlled-access highways, that is, divided highways with access only at grade-separated interchanges (for example, a 400-Series Highway in Ontario).

However, *expressway* may also refer to a limited-access road that has control of access but has at-grade junctions, railway crossings (for example, the Harbour Expressway in Thunder Bay.) Sometimes the term Parkway is also used (for example, the Hanlon Parkway in Guelph). In Saskatchewan, the term 'grid road' is used to refer to minor highways or rural roads, usually gravel, referring to the 'grid' upon which they were originally designed. In Quebec, freeways and expressways are called autoroutes.

In Alberta, the generic *Trail* is often used to describe a freeway, expressway or major urban street (for example, Deerfoot Trail, Macleod Trail or Crowchild Trail in Calgary, Yellowhead Trail in Edmonton). The British term motorway is not used. The American terms turnpike and tollway for a toll road are not common. The term throughway or thruway was used for first tolled limited-access highways (for example, the Deas Island Throughway, now Highway 99, from Vancouver, BC, to Blaine, Washington, USA or the Saint John Throughway (Highway 1) in Saint John, NB), but this term is not common anymore. In everyday speech, when a particular roadway is not being specified, the term *highway* is generally or exclusively used.

- A railway at-grade junction can be called a level crossing, as well as the term grade crossing, which is commonly used in the US.^[76]
- A railway or highway crossing overhead is an overpass or underpass, depending on which part of the crossing is referred to (the two are used more or less interchangeably); the British term flyover is sometimes used in Ontario, and in the Maritimes as well as on occasion in the prairies (such as the 4th avenue flyover in Calgary, Alberta), subway is also used.
- In Quebec, English speakers often use the word "metro" to mean subway. Non-native Anglophones of Quebec will also use the designated proper title "metro" to describe the Montreal subway system.

- The term *Texas gate* refers to the type of metal grid called a *cattle guard* in American English or a *cattle grid* in British English.
- Depending on the region, large trucks used to transport and deliver goods are referred to as 'transport trucks' (E.g. used in Ontario and Alberta) or 'transfer trucks' (E.g. used in Prince Edward Island)

Politics

- While in standard usage the terms prime minister and premier are interchangeable terms for the head of an elected parliamentary government, Canadian English today generally follows a usage convention of reserving the title *prime minister* for the federal first minister and referring to provincial or territorial leaders as *premiers*. However, because Canadian French does not have separate terms for the two positions, using *premier ministre* for both, the title *prime minister* is sometimes seen in reference to a provincial leader when a francophone is speaking or writing English. Also, until the 1970s the leader of the Ontario provincial government was officially styled *prime minister*.
- When a majority of the elected members of the House of Commons or a provincial legislature are not members of the same party as the government, the situation is referred to as a minority government rather than a hung Parliament.
- To *table* a document in Canadian, in parliamentary usage, is to introduce or present it (as in Britain), whereas in the U.S. it means to postpone consideration until a later date, often indefinitely. While the introduction meaning is the most common sense in non-parliamentary usage, the presentation meaning is also used in Canada. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary simply recommends avoiding the term in non-parliamentary context.^[77]
- In Canada, a committee is *struck*, whereas in the U.S. committees are appointed, formed, or created, etc.
- Several political terms are more in use in Canada than elsewhere, including *riding* (as a general term for a parliamentary constituency or electoral district). The term reeve was at one time common for the equivalent of a mayor in some smaller municipalities in British Columbia and Ontario, but is now falling into disuse. The title is still used for the leader of a rural municipality in Saskatchewan, parts of Alberta, and Manitoba.
- The term *Tory*, used in Britain with a similar meaning, denotes a supporter of the present-day federal Conservative Party of Canada, the historic federal or provincial Progressive Conservative Party. The term Red Tory is also used to denote the more socially liberal wings of the Tory parties. Blue Tory is less commonly used, and refers to more strict fiscal (rather than social) conservatism. The U.S. use of *Tory* to mean the Loyalists in the time of the American Revolution is not used in Canada, where they are called United Empire Loyalists, or simply Loyalists.
- Members of the Liberal Party of Canada or a provincial Liberal party are sometimes referred to as *Grits*. Historically, the term comes from the phrase *Clear Grit*, used in Victorian times in Canada to denote an object of quality or a truthful person. The term was assumed as a nickname by Liberals by the 1850s.
- Members of the Bloc Québécois are sometimes referred to as *Bloquistes*. At the purely provincial level, members of Quebec's Parti Québécois are often referred to as *Péquistes*, and members of the Quebec provincial Action démocratique du Québec as *Adéquistes*.
- The term "Socred" is no longer common due to its namesake party's decline, but referred to members of the Social Credit Party, and was particularly common in British Columbia. It was not used for Social Credit members from Quebec, nor generally used for the federal caucus of that party; in both cases *Créditiste*, the French term, was used in English.
- Members of the Senate are referred to by the title "Senator" preceding their name, as in the United States. Members of the House of Commons of Canada, following British parliamentary nomenclature, are termed "Members of Parliament", and are referred to as "Jennifer Jones,

MP" during their term of office only. Senators, and members of the Privy Council are styled "The Honourable" for life, and the Prime Minister of Canada is styled "The Right Honourable" for life, as is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Governor General. This honorific may also be bestowed by Parliament, as it was to retiring deputy prime minister Herb Gray in 1996. Members of provincial legislatures do not have a pre-nominal style, except in certain provinces, such as Nova Scotia where members of the Queen's Executive Council of Nova Scotia are styled "The Honourable" for life, and are entitled to the use of the post-nominal letters "ECNS".^[78] The Cabinet of Ontario serves concurrently (and not for life) as the Executive Council of Ontario, while serving members are styled "The Honourable", but are not entitled to post-nominal letters.

- Members of provincial/territorial legislative assemblies are called MLAs in all provinces and territories except: Ontario, where they have been called Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) since 1938; Quebec, where they have been called Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) since 1968; and Newfoundland and Labrador, where they are called Members of the House of Assembly (MHAs).

Law

Lawyers in all parts of Canada, except Quebec, which has its own civil law system, are called "barristers and solicitors" because any lawyer licensed in any of the common law provinces and territories must pass bar exams for, and is permitted to engage in, both types of legal practice in contrast to other common-law jurisdictions such as England, Wales and Ireland where the two are traditionally separated (i.e., Canada has a fused legal profession). The words *lawyer* and *counsel* (not *counsellor*) predominate in everyday contexts; the word *attorney* refers to any personal representative. Canadian lawyers generally do not refer to themselves as "attorneys", a term that is common in the United States.

The equivalent of an American district attorney, meaning the barrister representing the state in criminal proceedings, is called a crown attorney (in Ontario), crown counsel (in British Columbia), crown prosecutor or the crown, on account of Canada's status as a constitutional monarchy in which the Crown is the locus of state power.

The words *advocate* and *notary* – two distinct professions in Quebec civil law – are used to refer to that province's approximate equivalents of barrister and solicitor, respectively. It is not uncommon, however, for English-speaking advocates in Quebec to refer to themselves in English as "barrister(s) and solicitor(s)", as most advocates chiefly perform what would traditionally be known as "solicitor's work", while only a minority of advocates actually appear in court. In Canada's common law provinces and territories, the word *notary* means strictly a notary public.

Within the Canadian legal community itself, the word solicitor is often used to refer to any Canadian lawyer in general (much like the way the word *attorney* is used in the United States to refer to any American lawyer in general). Despite the conceptual distinction between *barrister* and *solicitor*, Canadian court documents would contain a phrase such as "*John Smith, solicitor for the Plaintiff*" even though "*John Smith*" may well himself be the barrister who argues the case in court. In a letter introducing him/herself to an opposing lawyer, a Canadian lawyer normally writes something like "*I am the solicitor*" for Mr. Tom Jones."

The word *litigator* is also used by lawyers to refer to a fellow lawyer who specializes in lawsuits even though the more traditional word *barrister* is still employed to denote the same specialization.

Judges of Canada's superior courts, which exist at the provincial and territorial levels, are traditionally addressed as "*My Lord*" or "*My Lady*", however there are some variances across certain jurisdictions, with some superior court judges preferring the titles "*Mister Justice*" or "*Madam Justice*" to "*Lordship*".

Masters are addressed as "*Mr. Master*" or simply "*Sir*." In British Columbia, masters are addressed as "*Your Honour*."

Judges of provincial or inferior courts are traditionally referred to in person as "*Your Honour*". Judges of the Supreme Court of Canada and of the federal-level courts prefer the use of "*Mister/Madam (Chief) Justice*". Justices of The Peace are addressed as "*Your Worship*". "*Your Honour*" is also the correct form of address for a Lieutenant Governor.

A serious crime is called an indictable offence, while a less-serious crime is called a summary offence. The older words felony and misdemeanour, which are still used in the United States, are not used in Canada's current Criminal Code (R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46) or by today's Canadian legal system. As noted throughout the Criminal Code, a person accused of a crime is called *the accused* and not *the defendant*, a term used instead in civil lawsuits.

In Canada, visible minority refers to a non-aboriginal person or group visibly not one of the majority race in a given population. The term comes from the Canadian Employment Equity Act, which defines such people as "persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".^[79] The term is used as a demographic category by Statistics Canada. The qualifier "visible" is used to distinguish such minorities from the "invisible" minorities determined by language (English vs. French) and certain distinctions in religion (Catholics vs. Protestants).^[80]

A county in British Columbia means only a regional jurisdiction of the courts and justice system and is not otherwise connected to governance as with counties in other provinces and in the United States. The rough equivalent to "county" as used elsewhere is a "Regional District".

Places

Distinctive Canadianisms are:

- bachelor: bachelor apartment, an apartment all in a single room, with a small bathroom attached ("They have a bachelor for rent").^[81] The usual American term is *studio*. In Quebec, this is known as a *one-and-a-half* apartment; some Canadians, especially in Prince Edward Island, call it a *loft*.^[82]
- camp: in Northern Ontario, it refers to what is called a *cottage* in the rest of Ontario and a *cabin* in the West.^[83] It is also used, to a lesser extent, in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, as well as in parts of New England. It generally refers to vacation houses in rural areas.
- fire hall: fire station, firehouse.^[84]
- height of land: a drainage divide. Originally American.^[85]
- parkade: a parking garage, especially in the West.^[82]
- washroom:^[86] the general term for what is normally named *public toilet* or *lavatory* in Britain. In the United States (where it originated) the word was mostly replaced by *restroom* in the 20th century. Generally used only as a technical or commercial term outside of Canada. The word *bathroom* is also used.
- Indian reserve, rather than the U.S. term *federal Indian reservation*. Often shortened to *reserve*, especially when the meaning is clear from context; another slang variant of this term is the shortened *res* or (more commonly) *rez*. Not to be confused with *res*, which in the context of universities refers strictly to *residences* or *halls of residence* (compare to the US American *dorms* or *dormitories*). Therefore, the sentences *when I lived on rez* and *when I lived in res* mean very different things.
- rancherie: the residential area of a First Nation reserve, used in BC only.

- *quiggly hole* and/or *quiggly*: the depression in the ground left by a *kekuli* or pithouse. Groups of them are called "quiggly hole towns". Used in the BC Interior only.
- *gas bar*: a *filling station* (gas station) with a central island, having pumps under a fixed metal or concrete awning.
- *booze can*: an after-hours establishment where alcohol is served, often illegally.
- *dépanneur*, or the diminutive form *dep*, is often used by English speakers in Quebec. This is because *convenience stores* are called *dépanneurs* in Canadian French.
- *snye*, a side-stream channel that rejoins a larger river, creating an island.

Daily life

Terms common in Canada, Britain and Ireland but less frequent or nonexistent in the United States are:

- *tin* (as in *tin of tuna*), for *can*, especially among older speakers. Among younger speakers, *can* is more common, with *tin* referring to a can which is wider than it is tall as in "a tin of sardines" as opposed to a "can of soup".
- *cutlery*, for *silverware* or *flatware*, where the material of which the utensil is made is not of consequence to the context in which it is used.
- *serviette*, especially in Eastern Canada, for a paper table *napkin*.^[87]
- *tap*, conspicuously more common than *faucet* in everyday usage.

The following are more or less distinctively Canadian:

- *ABM, bank machine*: synonymous with *ATM* (which is also used, but much more widely than ABM by financial organizations in the country).^{[88][89][90][91]}
- *BFI bin*: Dumpster, after a prominent Canadian waste management company, BFI Canada (which was eventually bought out and merged to become *Waste Connections of Canada*) in provinces where that company does business; compare to other generic trademarks such as *Kleenex*, *Xerox*, and even *Dumpster* itself.
- *chesterfield*: originally British and internationally used (as in classic furnishing terminology) to refer to a sofa whose arms are the same height as the back, it is a term for *any* couch or sofa in Canada (and, to some extent, Northern California).^{[92][93]} Once a hallmark of CanE, *chesterfield*, as with *settee* and *davenport*, is now largely in decline among younger generations in the western and central regions.^[94] *Couch* is now the most common term; *sofa* is also used.
- *dart*: cigarette, used primarily by adolescents and young adults.
- *dressing gown* or *housecoat*: in the United States, called a *bathrobe*.
- *eavestrough*: *rain gutter*. Also used, especially in the past, in the Northern and Western United States; the first recorded usage is in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*: "The tails tapering down that way, serve to carry off the water, d'ye see. Same with cocked hats; the cocks form gable-end eave-troughs *[sic]*, Flask."^[95]
- *flush*: toilet, used primarily by older speakers throughout the Maritimes.
- *garburator*: (rhymes with *carburetor*) a *garbage disposal*.^[96]
- *homogenized milk* or *homo milk*: milk containing 3.25% milk fat, typically called "whole milk" in the United States.
- *hydro*: a common synonym for *electrical service*, used primarily in New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Most of the power in these provinces is *hydroelectricity*, and suppliers' company names incorporate the term "Hydro". Usage: "I didn't pay my hydro bill so they shut off my lights." Hence *hydrofield* or *hydro corridor*, a line of electricity transmission towers, usually in groups cutting across a city, and *hydro lines/poles*,

electrical transmission lines/poles.^[97] These usages of *hydro* are also standard in the Australian state of Tasmania. Also in slang usage can refer to hydroponically grown marijuana.

- loonie: the Canadian one-dollar coin; derived from the use of the common loon on the reverse. The toonie (less commonly spelled *tooney*, *twooney*, *twoonie*) is the two-dollar coin. *Loonie* is also used to refer to the Canadian currency, particularly when discussing the exchange rate with the U.S. dollar; *loonie* and *toonie* describe coinage specifically. (for example, "I have a dollar in pennies" versus "I have three loonies in my pocket").
- pencil crayon:^[98] coloured pencil.
- pogie or pogey: term referring to unemployment insurance, which is now officially called *Employment Insurance* in Canada. Derived from the use of *pogey* as a term for a poorhouse.^[99] Not used for welfare, in which case the term is "*the dole*", as in "*he's on the dole, eh?*".
- parkade: multistorey parking garage.^[98]

Apparel

The following are common in Canada, but not in the United States or the United Kingdom.

- runners:^[100] running shoes, especially in Western Canada.^[101] Also used in Australian English^[102] and Irish English.^{[103][104][105]} Atlantic Canada prefers *sneakers* while central Canada (including Quebec and Ontario) prefers *running shoes*.^[106]
- touque (also spelled *toque* or *tuque*): a knitted winter hat. A similar hat would be called a *beanie* in the western United States and a *watch cap* in the eastern United States, though these forms are generally closer-fitting, and may lack a brim as well as a pompom. There seems to be no exact equivalent outside Canada, since the *tuque* is of French Canadian origin.
- bunnyhug: a hooded sweatshirt, with or without a zipper. Used mainly in Saskatchewan.

Food and beverage

- Most Canadians as well as Americans in the Northwest, North Central, Prairie and Inland North prefer *pop* over *soda* to refer to a carbonated beverage (though neither term is dominant in British English). *Soft drink* is also extremely common throughout Canada.
- What Americans call *Canadian bacon* is named back bacon in Canada, or, if it is coated in cornmeal or ground peas, cornmeal bacon or peameal bacon.
- What most Americans call a candy bar is usually known as a *chocolate bar* (as in the United Kingdom). In certain areas surrounding the Bay of Fundy, it is sometimes known as a *nut bar*; however, this use is more popular amongst older generations. Legally only bars made of solid chocolate may be labelled chocolate bars, others must be labelled as candy bars.^[107]
- Even though the terms *French fries* and *fries* are used by Canadians, some speakers use the word *chips* (and its diminutive, *chippies*) (chips is always used when referring to fish and chips, as elsewhere).
- whole-wheat bread is often referred to as *brown bread*, as in "Would you like white or brown bread for your toast?"
- An expiry date is the term used for the date when a perishable product will go bad (similar to the UK Use By date). The term *expiration date* is more common in the United States (where *expiry date* is seen mostly on the packaging of Asian food products). The term *Best Before* also sees common use, where although not spoiled, the product may not taste "as good".
- double-double: a cup of coffee with two measures of cream and two of sugar,^[108] most commonly associated with the Tim Hortons chain of coffee shops.^[109]
- Canadianisms relating to alcohol:

- *mickey*: a 375 mL (12.7 US fl oz; 13.2 imp fl oz) bottle of hard liquor (informally called a pint in the Maritimes and the United States). In Newfoundland, this is almost exclusively referred to as a "flask". In the United States, "*mickey*", or "Mickey Finn", refers to a drink laced with drugs.
- *two-six, twenty-sixer, twixer*: a 750 mL (25 US fl oz; 26 imp fl oz) bottle of hard liquor (called a quart in the Maritimes). The word *handle* is less common. Similarly, a 1.14 L (39 US fl oz; 40 imp fl oz) bottle of hard liquor is known as a *forty* and a 1.75 L (59 US fl oz; 62 imp fl oz) bottle is known as a *sixty* or *half gallon* in Nova Scotia.
- *Texas mickey* (especially in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; more often a "Saskatchewan mickey" in western Canada): a 3 L (101 US fl oz; 106 imp fl oz) bottle of hard liquor. (Despite the name, Texas mickeys are generally unavailable outside of Canada.)
- *two-four*: a case of 24 beers, also known as a *case* in Eastern Canada, or a *flat* in Western Canada (referencing that cans of beer are often sold in packages of six, with four packages to a flat box for shipping and stacking purposes).
- *six-pack, half-sack, half-case, or poverty-pack*: a case of six beers
- *poutine*: a snack of french fries topped with cheese curds and hot gravy.
- There are also genericized trademarks used in Canada:
 - *cheezies*: cheese puffs. The name is a genericized trademark based on a brand of crunchy cheese snack sold in Canada.
 - *Kraft Dinner* or "*KD*": for any packaged dry macaroni and cheese mix, even when it is not produced by Kraft.
- *freezie*: A frozen flavoured sugar water snack common worldwide, but known by this name exclusively in Canada.
- *dainty*: a fancy cookie, pastry, or square served at a social event (usually plural). Used in western Canada.
- *Smarties*: a bean-sized, small candy-covered chocolate, similar to plain M&M's. This is also seen in British English. Smarties in the United States refer to small tart powdered disc sold in rolls; in Canada these tart candies are sold as "Rockets".

Prairies (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta)

A strong Canadian raising exists in the prairie regions together with certain older usages such as *chesterfield* and *front room* also associated with the Maritimes. Aboriginal Canadians are a larger and more conspicuous population in prairie cities than elsewhere in the country and certain elements of aboriginal speech in English are sometimes to be heard. Similarly, the linguistic legacy, mostly intonation but also speech patterns and syntax, of the Scandinavian, Slavic and German settlers – who are far more numerous and historically important in the Prairies than in Ontario or the Maritimes – can be heard in the general milieu. Again, the large Métis population in Saskatchewan and Manitoba also carries with it certain linguistic traits inherited from French, Aboriginal and Celtic forebears. Some terms are derived from immigrant groups or are just local inventions:

- *bluff*: small group of trees isolated by prairie
- *bunny hug*: elsewhere hoodie or hooded sweat shirt (mainly in Saskatchewan, but also in Manitoba)
- *ginch/gonch/gitch/gotch*: underwear (usually men's or boys' underwear, more specifically briefs; whereas women's underwear are *gotchies*), probably of Eastern European or Ukrainian origin. *Gitch* and *gotch* are primarily used in Saskatchewan and Manitoba while the variants with an *n* are common in Alberta and British Columbia.^[110]
- *jam buster*: jelly-filled doughnut.

- porch climber: moonshine or homemade alcohol. *Porch climber* has a slightly distinguished meaning in Ontario where it refers to a beverage mixed of beer, vodka, and lemonade.
- slough: pond – usually a pond on a farm
- Vi-Co: occasionally used in Saskatchewan instead of *chocolate milk*. Formerly a brand of chocolate milk.

In farming communities with substantial Ukrainian, German or Mennonite populations, accents, sentence structure and vocabulary influenced by these languages is common. These communities are most common in the Saskatchewan Valley region of Saskatchewan and Red River Valley region of Manitoba.

Descendants of marriages between Hudson's Bay Company workers of mainly Scottish descent and Cree women spoke Bungi, a creole that blends Cree and English. A few Bungi speakers can still be found in Manitoba. It is marked by no masculine, feminine or third-person pronouns.^[48]

British Columbia

British Columbian English has several words still in current use borrowed from the Chinook Jargon although the use of such vocabulary is observably decreasing. The most famous and widely used of these terms are skookum and saltchuck. However, among young British Columbians, almost no one uses this vocabulary, and only a small percentage is even familiar with the meaning of such words. In the Yukon, cheechako is used for newcomers or greenhorns.

Northern Ontario

Northern Ontario English has several distinct qualities stemming from its large Franco-Ontarian population. As a result several French and English words are used interchangeably. A number of phrases and expressions may also be found in Northern Ontario that are not present in the rest of the province,^[111] such as the use of camp for a summer home where Southern Ontario speakers would idiomatically use cottage.

Informal speech

A rubber in the U.S. and Canada is slang for a condom; however, in Canada it is sometimes (rarely except for Newfoundland and South Western Ontario) another term for an eraser (as it is in the United Kingdom and Ireland).

The word bum can refer either to the buttocks (as in Britain), or, derogatorily, to a homeless person (as in the U.S.). However, the "buttocks" sense does not have the indecent character it retains in British use, as it and "butt" are commonly used as a polite or childish euphemism for ruder words such as arse (commonly used in Atlantic Canada and among older people in Ontario and to the west) or ass, or mitiss (used in the Prairie Provinces, especially in northern and central Saskatchewan; probably originally a Cree loanword). Older Canadians may see "bum" as more polite than "butt", which before the 1980s was often considered rude.

Similarly the word pissed can refer either to being drunk (as in Britain), or being angry (as in the U.S.), though anger is more often said as pissed off, while piss drunk or pissed up is said to describe inebriation (though piss drunk is sometimes also used in the US, especially in the northern states).

One of the most distinctive Canadian phrases is the spoken interrogation or tag eh.^[112] The only usage of eh exclusive to Canada, according to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, is for "ascertaining the comprehension, continued interest, agreement, etc., of the person or persons addressed" as in, "It's four kilometres away, eh, so I have to go by bike." In that case, eh? is used to confirm the attention of the listener and to invite a supportive

noise such as *mm* or *oh* or *okay*. This usage is also common in Queensland, Australia and New Zealand. Other uses of *eh* – for instance, in place of *huh?* or *what?* meaning "please repeat or say again" – are also found in parts of the British Isles and Australia. It is common in Northern/Central Ontario, the Maritimes and the Prairie provinces. The word *eh* is used quite frequently in the North Central dialect, so a Canadian accent is often perceived in people from North Dakota, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The term *Canuck* simply means *Canadian* in its demonymic form, and, as a term used even by Canadians themselves, it is not considered derogatory. In the 19th century and early 20th century it tended to refer to French-Canadians, while the only Canadian-built version of the popular World War I-era American Curtiss JN-4 Jenny training biplane aircraft, the JN-4C, got the "Canuck" nickname, 1,260 of which were built. The nickname Janey Canuck was used by Anglophone women's rights writer Emily Murphy in the 1920s and the Johnny Canuck comic book character of the 1940s. Throughout the 1970s, Canada's winning World Cup men's downhill ski team was called the "Crazy Canucks" for their fearlessness on the slopes.^[113] It is also the name of the Vancouver Canucks, the National Hockey League team of Vancouver, British Columbia.



A Canadian-built Curtiss JN-4C "Canuck" training biplane of 1918, with a differing vertical tail to the original U.S. version

The term *hoser*, popularized by Bob & Doug McKenzie, typically refers to an uncouth, beer-swilling male and is a euphemism for "loser" coming from the earlier days of hockey played on an outdoor rink and the losing team would have to hose down the ice after the game so it froze smooth.^[114] Bob & Doug also popularized the use of *Beauty, eh*, another western slang term which may be used to describe something as being of interest or note or deserving approval.

A *Newf* or *Newfie* is someone from Newfoundland and Labrador; sometimes considered derogatory. In Newfoundland, the term *Mainlander* refers to any Canadian (sometimes American, occasionally Labradorian) not from the island of Newfoundland. *Mainlander* is also occasionally used derogatorily.

In the Maritimes, a *Caper* or "Cape Bretoner" is someone from Cape Breton Island, a *Bluenoser* is someone with a thick, usually southern Nova Scotia accent or as a general term for a Nova Scotian (Including Cape Bretoners), while an *Islander* is someone from Prince Edward Island (the same term is used in British Columbia for people from Vancouver Island, or the numerous islands along it). A *Haligonian* refers to someone from the city of Halifax.

Cape Bretoners and Newfies (from Newfoundland and Labrador) often have similar slang. "Barmp" is often used as the sound a car horn makes, example: "He cut me off so I Barmped the horn at him". When saying "B'y", while sounds like the traditional farewell, it is a syncopated shortening of the word "boy", referring to a person, example: "How's it goin, b'y?". Another slang that is commonly used is "doohickey" which means an object, example: "Pass me that doohickey over there". When an individual uses the word "biffed", they mean that they threw something. Example: "I got frustrated so I biffed it across the room".^[115]

Other Canadianisms

- The alphanumeric code appended to mail addresses (the equivalent of the similar British postcode and the all-numeric American ZIP code) is called a postal code.
- The term *First Nations* is often used in Canada to refer to what are called American Indians or Native Americans in the United States. This term does *not* include the Métis and Inuit, however; the term aboriginal peoples (and sometimes spelled with a capital "A": "Aboriginal peoples") is preferred when all three groups are included. The term Eskimo has been replaced by the term Inuit in the past few decades. It is now considered offensive to use the term Eskimo, but is still used commonly (without pejorative intent) by those born in the early-mid-20th century.

- "Going camping" still refers to staying in a tent in a campground or wilderness area, while "going out to camp" may refer to a summer cottage or home in a rural area. "Going to camp" refers to children's summer camps. In British Columbia, "camp" was used as a reference for certain company towns (for example, Bridge River). It is used in western Canada to refer to logging and mining camps such as Juskatla Camp. It is also a synonym for a mining district; the latter occurs in names such as Camp McKinney and usages such as "Cariboo gold camp" and "Slocan mining camp" for the Cariboo goldfields and Slocan silver-galena mining district, respectively. A "cottage" in British Columbia is generally a small house, perhaps with an English design or flavour, while in southern Ontario it more likely means a second home on a lake. Similarly, "chalet" – originally a term for a small warming hut – can mean a second home of any size, but refers to one located in a ski resort. In Northern Ontario, these second homes tend to be called "camps". In Western Canada, these second homes tend to be called "cabins". A "bunkie" is a secondary building at these second homes that are small enough to require no building permits and house extra guests visiting.
- One of the other distinctions between Canadian English and British English is the use of the phrase "try to + infinitive" versus the use of the phrase "try and + infinitive". Canadian English uses "try to" while British English uses "try and". Originally, the distinction did not exist, but through the evolution of the French term *trier*, meaning 'pick out', 'separate', or 'distinguish' into the English *try*, a number of meanings were adopted along the way, including 'attempt'. Canadian English speakers use "try and" 30% of the time while British English speakers use it 73% of the time. However, since the 2000s, the two terms have begun to see equally frequent usage in British English.^[116]
- A *stagette* is a female bachelorette party (US) or hen party (UK).
- A "shag" is thought, erroneously, to be derived from "shower" and "stag", and describes a dance where alcohol, entry tickets, raffle tickets, and so on, are sold to raise money for the engaged couple's wedding. Normally a Northwest Ontario, Northern Ontario and sometimes Manitoba term, a "stag and doe" or "buck and doe" is used elsewhere in Ontario. The more common term for this type of event in Manitoba is a "social".
- The *humidex* is a measurement used by meteorologists to reflect the combined effect of heat and humidity (vs. US term *heat index* quantifying the apparent temperature).
- *The States*: Commonly used to refer to the United States or almost as often *the U.S.*, much less often *U.S.A.* or *America* which are commonly used in other countries, the latter more often used in other English-speaking nations.
- *Drop the gloves*: to begin a fight. A reference to a practice in hockey of removing gloves prior to fighting, and the idiom "throw down the gauntlet".
- *Back east* typically means 'Ontario or possibly Quebec' whereas *Down East* instead refers to the Maritimes^[117] – the latter term is used in New England, especially in areas very close to Atlantic Canada, to refer to the two eastern coastal counties of Maine.

Attitudes towards Canadian English

In 2011, just under 21.5 million Canadians, representing 65% of the population, spoke English most of the time at home, while 58% declared it their mother language.^[118] English is the major language everywhere in Canada except Quebec, and most Canadians (85%) can speak English.^[119] While English is not the preferred language in Quebec, 36.1% of Québécois can speak English.^[120] Nationally, Francophones are five times more likely to speak English than Anglophones are to speak French – 44% and 9% respectively.^[121] Only 3.2% of Canada's English-speaking population resides in Quebec—mostly in Montreal.^[nb 1]

Attitude studies on Canadian English are somewhat rare. A perceptual study on Albertan and Ontarians exists^[122] in combination with older literature from the 1970s–80s. Sporadic reports can be found in the literature, e.g. on Vancouver English,^[123] in which more than 80% believe in a "Canadian way of speaking",

with those with a university education reporting higher than those without.

Jaan Lilles argues in an essay for *English Today* that there is no variety of "Canadian English". He acknowledges that no variety of English is more "real" or "natural" than any other, but that, in the words of American linguist John Algeo, "All linguistic varieties are fictions." According to Lilles, Canadian English is simply not a "useful fiction".^[124] He goes on to argue that too often national identity is conflated with linguistic identity, and that in the case of "Canadian English", supposedly unique features of Canadian speakers, such as certain lexical terms such as *muskeg* are artificially exaggerated to distinguish Canadian speech primarily from that found in the United States.^[124]

See also

- [List of Canadian English dictionaries](#)
- [Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles, Second Edition](#)
- [North American English](#)
- [American and British English spelling differences](#)
- [Bungi creole](#)
- [Canadian French](#)
- [Canadian Gaelic](#)
- [Quebec French](#)
- [Franglais](#)
- [Regional accents of English](#)
- [Vowel shift](#)

Notes

1. 18,858,908 Canadians identify their mother tongue as English. 599,230 Québécois identify their mother tongue as English and of that 309,885 live in Montreal.^[119]

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External links

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